

the bird was resting on the water with its head under its wing. The specimen was brought to the Museum on October 20, where it was identified, measured and skinned by the writer. It measured .37 inches in length, wing 19½ inches, tail 10 inches, extent of wing 72 inches. It was in poor flesh and weighed only five pounds, while the average weight as given by Audubon is about seven. On dissection the stomach was found to contain a sunfish eight inches in length and in nearly perfect condition, so that it was probably caught in Walker Lake or near by. The specimen is now in the University of Michigan Museum (No. 42189).

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## STATUS OF THE EUROPEAN STARLING IN ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY.

BY LOUIS S. KOHLER.

The European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) which was successfully introduced into this country about 1890, first appeared in this county during the spring of 1903. The first flock of these exotics numbered about fifteen and were upon first sight mistaken for a small gathering of Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). Their odd gyrations while in the air and methods of alighting upon the ground quickly corrected this erroneous idea and I immediately began investigating more closely and found them to be the species in question. About this same number remained in the neighborhood of a refuse pile on a farm in Bloomfield until the middle of July, when they disappeared and were not again seen until March 2d, 1904. At this time they came in a flock of about two hundred. This collection appeared intermittently at numerous places in Newark, East Orange and Bloomfield until May 1st, when they broke up into pairs and began seeking nesting places. The sites were principally in cupolas, on station poles of the telephone companies and in deserted woodpecker nest holes.

In 1905 they had increased to large numbers and were present in many places throughout the county. Up to this time they appeared very timid and kept well away from mankind and his habitations. I found four nests this year in nest holes of the woodpeckers, one under the cornice of the Bloomfield High School and about a dozen at various telephone station poles in and about Newark.

In 1906 and 1907 they had increased to surprisingly large numbers, and detached flocks were present throughout the year, especially about the garbage dumps. It has been my experience that these birds run the gulls a close second for honors as scavengers, and a sure place to always find them is near one of these garbage disposals.

In 1908 and 1909 they had further increased and began establishing permanent residence in bird boxes, nest holes, hollow trees, and on cornices and other accessible places on public buildings, and remained in the vicinity after once taking possession. In 1909 I first found them engaged in conflicts with *Sialia sialis* and *Colaptes a. luteus*, and this year four newly completed nests of the Flicker and three of the Bluebird were taken possession of by these interlopers.

Within ten feet of my study window there is located a nesting box which my father placed there twenty years ago for the wrens and bluebirds. This, however, was never occupied by any of our domestic birds, but was seized by the English Sparrows and held by them until 1908, when a pair of Starlings appeared and drove them away. The Starlings reared two broods during 1908, one in 1909 and two this year in this box. The birds have permanently established themselves and are about the box daily, only leaving when away feeding.

Articles have appeared in a number of our bird magazines for and against these birds and it is my opinion that at present their introduction has not reached a degree upon which may be based a conclusion as to whether they are beneficial or otherwise, but, from my own experience with these birds about my home, I am almost convinced that the time is not

far off when they will become as obnoxious as the omnipresent *Passer domesticus* is to us now.

They have several characteristics which in themselves are very admirable. Prominent among these are their usefulness as disposers of refuse and their pugnacity towards the exotic sparrows. On the other hand, they roost in the shade trees over the sidewalks, under cornices of buildings, and in many places which are detrimental to pedestrians' clothing and to the outward appearance of our buildings caused by the unsightly marks due to their excretions. In line with the above, they give voice to a monotonous wheezing call which lasts from sunrise to sunset and is very tiresome even to the most confirmed bird lover, not considering the enforced unsophisticated listener who will be only too apt to condemn them for this alone.

The next decade will, however, settle all controversies regarding these birds and positively prove their value to us. It is sincerely hoped that at the end of this period the balance will be "on the credit side of their account" as, aside from the above not over serious objections, they are a magnificent bird and one which the community at large may be proud to have in their midst.